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ABSTRACT

One way to ensure the quality of education in schools in the developed countries of the West is through the use of national school inspections; an analysis of the inspection system used in England and Wales is offered here. The 1992 Education Act instituted a radically different mode of inspection in England and Wales. The act gave contracts to private teams to analyze schools and to report on the health of the system. The law called for the inspection of all schools, using a 4-year cycle. Since Registered Inspectors have a linchpin role in making the system work, an analysis of their activities is presented in depth. The responsibilities of the inspectors are carefully detailed, along with some of the problems that they have encountered, such as their exclusion from the field in which pedagogical prescriptions and regulations are defined. The system can be improved by addressing the criticism that it is self- evaluation rather than external evaluation that motivates change in teachers and school organizations. This criticism is answered by claiming that inspectors offer schools a framework that is valid and reliable and against which schools can evaluate themselves. (RJM)

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Ensuring and maintaining quality in schools through central regulation: some lessons from England and Wales.

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Introduction

The problem of ensuring quality in mass education systems is as old as the systems themselves. Responses to this problem reflect the political and cultural organisation of different nation states. In the USA the problem has to be dealt with at a local level. The federal government having very restricted in powers in the field of education and social policy, these being matters reserved in the first instance to the states and then being devolved to even more local levels. The situation in Europe is different. Although in Germany the role of control and regulation is devolved to a regional level, the land, central government reserves to itself significant power over education. In the United Kingdom although there is some administrative devolution to local authorities, and in recent years to schools themselves, the central state has reserved the right to regulate and control most aspects of education.

There has been increasing concern since the middle seventies over the quality of education offered in schools in many of the developed countries of the west. International comparisons, latterly with the "tiger economies" of the East, have led an increasing concern for the outputs of schools and to the use of assessment and testing for reasons of public accountability. What has been and continues to be challenged by some politicians, policy makers and academics is the effectivity of schools as organisations. A powerful consequence of this has been the use of a model measuring school performance entirely as matter of outcomes, a model which at best minimises the effects of context and ignores processes. This focus on outcomes only is more a feature of USA policy. In Europe the use of national school inspection has offered some focus on the processes of schooling down to the level of the classroom. The most recently developed system of inspection is that used in England and Wales and it is with this system as a model that this paper is concerned. We argue that this is not merely a parochial interest there has been considerable interest in the English and Welsh system among other inspectorates in Europe and to some extent in parts of the USA.

> *"The John F Kennedy School is a bit further afield than the schools inspected by the Office for Standards in Education....The three person inspection team made its three day visit at the invitation of education officials pushing for periodic British style external reviews of US schools now generally accountable only to local schools boards.... Some American educators want regular inspections on the British model. In Boston, school officials have approved an 'accountability plan', although it use outside teams of educators rather than professional inspectors to review schools."* (Marcus 1998)

The Inspection System in England and Wales

The 1992 Education Act instituted a radically different mode of inspection. A relatively small, never more than 500, elite group of national inspectors, (Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, HMI) was replaced by a new office of state; The Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (OHMCI). Its role was to give contracts to private teams, operate quality

control and assurance, collect, analyse and comment on data arising from the inspection process and to report on the health of the system. It was argued in the lead up to this change that regular, rigorous and open inspection would lead to school improvement. The publication of school reports was deemed to be an important aspect of the enterprise and vital to ensuring not merely improvement but the driving out of the system of "bad schools", a policy of "naming and shaming", because of parental rejection of them.

The creation of the organisation and its ethos was the responsibility of the first Chief Inspector Professor Stewart Sutherland. He made it a matter of urgency that the new organisation should be independent of the DES later DFEE and was seen to be independent. He recognised the power of the very special statutory and constitutional position of OHMCI in that it was a non-ministerial department of state. This gave the Chief Inspector an almost unique position in that although reporting to parliament through the Secretary of State for Education he was not a member of the Secretary of State's department. This independence enabled the Chief Inspector to comment critically on the condition of education in England in any way that he thought fit. To this end he instituted the annual lecture and continued the publication of an annual report, an innovation of the last Chief Inspector of Schools, Eric Bolton. He also secured undertakings that inspection reports would be published to a timetable determined by the Chief Inspector and without editorial review by ministers or other officials. Sutherland further asserted the independence of his department from the DES/DFEE by relocating from Sanctuary Building back to Elizabeth House, the river Thames providing a real geographic barrier between the two departments and operating as a powerful symbol of their separation.

> *"I marched them out of Sanctuary Building and across the river to Elizabeth House to show our independence."* (interview with Stewart Sutherland)

The origins of inspection in England, to a large extent, lie in seeking compliance to regulations, to ensuring accountability and in maintaining control. The memoirs of inspectors confirm this. The role of HMI during the nineteenth and earlier part of the twentieth century was to ensure or enforce compliance of elementary schools to central regulations. Sneyd-Kynnersley's (1910) account of his work up to his retirement in 1907 provides evidence of this. Clark's (1976) memoirs of his work as an assistant inspector before WW2 shows him behaving as an inspector in a strikingly similar way to his earlier colleague. Like Sneyd-Kynnersley he tests the pupils reading, writing and number and checks that the school is following central regulations. It was to this central idea of regulation that Sutherland returned inspection.

The new system was to be different from that operated recently by HMI, in that its focus was to be the inspection of all schools on a four year cycle. It seems that Sutherland did not see his organisation as replicating HMI but as akin to the other regulatory bodies set up, around the same time, to oversee newly privatised industries such as gas and water. In fact Sutherland created the acronym OFSTED, Office for Standards in Education by analogy with OFGAS and OFWAT. However if OFSTED was to meet its mission of

inspection for improvement, neither the sort of crude regulatory system of the nineteenth and early twentieth century nor the post complaint method used by OFGAS nor OFWAT would be sufficient. OFSTED then was developed into a complex organisation incorporating a range of functions, a major one being the production of inspection documents directing and guiding the private inspectors' behaviour, and controlling and assuring the quality of inspection. We will return to nature and significance of this documentation later. Professor Sutherland established an independent and unique method of inspection with a unique and explicit mission to bring about school improvement. If this system was to work the role of the Registered Inspector had to be rapidly established and it is to this group we now turn. In doing this we will draw on a variety of sources including data collected during an ESRC funded project investigating the relationship between inspection in primary schools and national policy making.

Registered Inspectors

Registered Inspectors have a linchpin role in making the system work and a critical role in the production of inspection knowledge. The Registered Inspectors in our sample come from similar professional backgrounds. They have been LEA advisors/inspectors with a background as primary school Headteachers, others have a background in Higher Education, teacher training, having previously been teachers, and a final group are former HMI. The following table shows the experience and institutional locations of our interview sample.

Figure 1

Interviews with large contractors[1] and with senior officials from OFSTED indicate that this is typical of Registered Inspectors nationally. Our sample and the evidence of other studies show that Registered Inspectors and their team member inspectors have appropriate experience and qualifications. In the opinion of a Senior HMI, Registered Inspectors have done more inspections than an HMI ever did and as a consequence may now be seen as the repositories of inspection experience.

Registered Inspectors make the system work. The stress that schools suffer before, during and after inspection has been the subject of much research and comment. (Duffy undated, Jefferey and Wood 1996, Brimblecombe et al 1996, Woods, Jefferey, Troman and Boyle 1997). There has been little comment or research on the workload and stress that Registered Inspectors are subject to before, during and after the inspection. Our informants make the point that the total responsibility, legal and professional, rests on the shoulders of the Registered Inspectors.

> *"I've no intention of going on, I've 18 months left, and I shall not do any more, it's too much."* (Registered Inspector)

[1] It was originally envisaged that individual Registered Inspectors, as team leaders would tender for inspection contracts, however the new inspection system led to the development of large, medium and small contractors for whom Registered Inspectors work.

The tasks that face a Registered Inspector are daunting. They must manage a team skilfully such that no complaints of professional discourtesy or of idiosyncratic behaviour arise. They must form working relationships with Headteachers, governors, school staff and parents. And they must report orally to the Headteachers and chair of governors at least on the results of inspection at the end of the inspection process and produce a report conforming to OFSTED's stringent requirements within six weeks!

> *"when you are inspecting you are really under pressure all the time and you've got to get it right. You can't guess things, you've got to get the evidence. It's eight in the morning until eight at night, then writing up, and its a very intensive period and I think they were probably right to put us under that similar pressure you know, and if you couldn't hack it well you know.."* (Registered Inspector)

In considering the problem of inspecting and the complex relationships that are involved Registered Inspectors point particularly to the value of experience in ensuring that inspection is properly conducted. One of our informants with lengthy experience as a primary school Headteacher and then as a senior LEA advisor was insistent that relevant experience was essential.

> *"My perspective is that I don't think it's right that people who have mainly taught in secondary schools or the reverse, who have mainly taught in primary, should go into the other phase of education with the right to criticise along the lines that they do. Now I'm not naive enough to believe that you've got to do something in order to be able to criticise, I'm not saying that. But the sort of activity that inspection of a primary or secondary school involves is so fine-tuned and it's so, the judgements that you have to make are, I don't want to use the word severe, it's not severe, are so important - I can't think of a better word than that at the moment although there is a better word - that you really do need some sort of background in order to be able to make them. So I've got a very strong view on that"* (Registered Inspector)

The general opinion of this group of Registered Inspectors was that "doing" the inspection professionally and sympathetically and making proper judgements is predicated not just on previous experience but the amount and quality of it. The concept of "a life time's experience" and a range of work in schools, advisory services and Higher education was deemed to be what was required. One informant made this very explicit.

> *"I spent all my life in primary schools, all my professional life, how much more difficult must it be for those people who after one-day training have to come in to inspect primary schools? If you want somebody who is doing it properly they can't be that ..it's experience that counts"* (Registered Inspector)

> *"It (relevant experience) is essential for your credibility to primary schools. They want to know you've been a head, know what It's like."* (Registered Inspector, previous primary head and LEA officer)

Having relevant experience makes Registered Inspectors not simply more acceptable to schools and sympathetic to them but enables them to exercise professional judgement. One confident informant had been the Headteacher of two primary schools and had then spent some 15 years as a local authority advisor/inspector.

> *"I feel I've got a lot of professional independence and my line has always been to do it.....I do inspections in the way I think they should be done which is on a consultative basis which of course as you know what comes out from OFSTED is sometimes contradictory, I just say to myself I must do it the way I think best"* (Registered Inspector)

A Registered Inspector who works with a large local authority team, often with members known to each other aimed always to apply the "Framework" consistently, rigorously and fairly. His concern was to use the "Framework" as a way of ;

> *"making sure we are actually answering those questions so that come to the end of the inspection I'm confident we have answered all the bits we have to.....and in terms of interpretation I think we have a corporate view of how to interpret it because of the way we've worked together"* (Registered Inspector)

This is not to say that Registered Inspectors operate in a maverick manner, interpreting OFSTED documentation in an idiosyncratic way, rather that they feel their experience enables them to use it in a productive and professional manner. For instance discussing the revision of the Framework and Handbook one informant stated;

> *"I think the new Framework is better than the old, there's no doubt about that, I'll start by saying that. More manageable...but the old was a really good book..It picked up all the important things about schools."* (Registered Inspector)

The following comment makes the point that the Framework and Handbook must be followed as precisely as possible but that does not preclude interpretation.

> *"You've got to put into your report all the things that are clearly outlined in the framework. I mean you won't get away with not doing that, so in the one sense, that's quite a proper structure because you've got to treat schools the same as far as you can. But I think there is an interpretation"* (Registered Inspector)

Rather like the mode of inspection described by Sneyd-Kynnersley and by Clark, Registered Inspectors have to follow a strict regime set out in regulatory documentation. OFSTED produces the documentation and insists that it is used under stringent guidelines. Even so Registered Inspectors have a limited capacity to interpret the documentation and do so, as did many HMI inspecting under the Revised Code.

> *"The way I read what OFSTED are saying to me is that is to make it*

> *developmental they did say that right at the beginning, it'll waste so much time and effort if it is only say as a way to tell political masters what schools are like. Looking at a school after the Head's been there 2 years I seem to have got quite a lot of schools where the Head's been there 18 months or so and one of the things I feel I've been able to do is really get to grips with what the Head feels about the school, to say what we feel about it and I am sure that is helpful to the Head, but its not always in OFSTED."* (Registered Inspector)

Registered Inspectors are prepared both to do the hard work and to interpret the documents to *"get the best deal for the school"* because they are convinced that inspection can and should lead to improvement. Although many of the sample had been a little sceptical of inspection generating improvement when they first began to inspect they all felt that an objective and rigorous report on a school would be useful.

> *"I do think it improves practice. I think what it does, it helps schools to focus on things that are really important. I think the framework is helpful before the inspection begins in helping those schools to focus on it."* (Registered Inspector)

Having completed a large number of inspections they are convinced of OFSTED's mission. It is interesting here, to note that Roy James recently retired HMCI Wales argued against the new system at first but now declares that there is something in it. Inspection, in his view, will lead to school improvement.

Although Registered Inspectors perceive the possibility of inspection leading to improvement they point to a lacuna in the system. There is a requirement for the progress of schools post inspection to be monitored, in the case of schools deemed to be satisfactory this seems not to be prioritised. More significantly in the view of our informants, schools in special measures receive support, help and guidance in meeting their needs, but schools which are *"said to be OK don't get much if any"*.

> *"I try to avoid serious weaknesses, there are ways round it, either put them in special measures or make them satisfactory..they only get help, extra funds for measures."* (Registered inspector)

They point to two different things. First there are only minimal extra resources to support school development and improvement after inspection, unless the school is deemed to be failing. Second they understand the difficulties that LEA's have in meeting the advice needs of schools because of the way in which they have been stripped of power and resources since 1979. It is difficult, they believe, to identify who can fill the gap but that without support and monitoring, how will schools use inspection to improve?

There has been anecdotal evidence of Registered Inspectors seeking to offer schools follow-up advice but our informants accept that the distancing of inspection from advice is the best thing to do.

> *"There should be (advice), but it's got to be somebody who wasn't involved in the inspection."* (Registered Inspector)

The same Registered Inspector spoke of a Headteacher who had sought follow up advice from him. He had refused but explained why the head had made the request.

> *"He (the Head) thought the people who'd made the identification were best placed and, I mean, perhaps that's right too. But on the other hand you can't put the two together, but somebody else could probably do it, and that would be good. If we could do an extension of inspection into the advice mould, but done by other inspectors, that would be good"* (Registered Inspector)

Registered Inspectors are convinced that inspection can lead to improvement but feel that by itself it is not enough.

The Responsibility of Inspectors

We now turn to a conceptual model of inspection in current use. (Fitz and Lee 1996) We draw here on the work of Basil Bernstein (1995, 1996) which posits fields with their own rules of access, regulation, privilege and specialised interests. The definition of what counts as 'good' and 'poor' education and educational practice is generated in what Bernstein calls the Official Recontextualizing Field. We locate OFSTED and DFEE in this field. From here the definitions and accompanying regulations the "official pedagogy" emanate. In the case with which we are dealing, this discourse is transmitted via the Framework documents. This documentation "Handbooks for the Inspection of Secondary, Primary and Special Schools (HMSO 1995) is claimed by OFSTED to be "consensual" and "the criteria for school evaluation it contains are widely accepted as valid and reliable." (OFSTED 1998). It is through this documentation that OFSTED direct guidance and advice at the Registered Inspector. But, it is in the field of inspection, the field of pedagogic recontextualization that the "official pedagogy" is activated. The responsibility of Registered Inspectors to ensure compliance to regulation is recognised in the recent document setting out policy and practice for the "Literacy Hour" (DFEE 1997) for instance. Registered Inspectors occupy this field and in operating in it have the responsibility not merely to transmit the pedagogy by the stringent application of regulations but at its edges to re-interpret it such that its goals can be met. As we noted above, the improvement model proposed by the centre is a top down model and this is deeply problematic, but the fact that OFSTED "knows" what to evaluate, inspect, implies working towards a goal. Registered Inspectors can be seen as actors attempting to ameliorate that so that schools accept the model and use it to reach the goal.

The problem for Registered Inspectors is that they have responsibility but are officially excluded from the field in which pedagogical prescriptions and regulations are defined. Our data shows Registered Inspectors dissatisfied with this circumstance. They are wedded to the ideas of improvement but acutely aware that it is deeply problematic. They therefore have recourse to interpreting the documentation so that it becomes more usable and meaningful for schools. This involves as we noted above "*getting the best deal for*

the school". Each revision of documentation by OFSTED has led to increasing regulation and control. OFSTED is aiming to do two things first to guard against idiosyncratic judgements and thus produce fairness between schools and to reduce the capacity of Registered Inspectors to interpret the documentation in order to prescribe pedagogy and maintain control. In the case of the latter it is worth noting that the control of inspectors has always been a problem for the system.

> *"There came a new Code, that was to put elementary education on a really satisfactory basis. This was so common a phenomenon that we hardly turned our head to look at it."*
> (Sneyd-Kynnersley 1910)

The lacuna that Registered Inspectors point to is both support and guidance for meeting the Key Issues in their reports and who monitors school action and how. They are acutely aware of the "problem" that action planning after inspection causes for schools who have had a "reasonable or good" OFSTED. This is recognised by Peter Matthews of OFSTED as noted above.

> *"I think yes it would be a good idea if we went back in after 6 months to review it. You could have the sort of framework I suppose you could confirm changes. I mean HMI aren't be able to do it."* (Registered Inspector)

All of our informants felt that monitoring was not done and the action plan was unlikely to lead to the improvement that the system of inspection promised. It was also the view of some of our Headteacher informants. They felt that having prepared for inspection and been through it, some improvement had come about but they wanted to know how they could be helped through the next stage.

> *"They ought to have a system didn't they for doing it a sort of framework for them to work for.... I always have this question you know what happens after an inspection and I'm always never quite sure what I'm saying but I've taken to saying well it's the responsibility of the LEA because the question is from big people in the business they don't ask it this way but what happens if we don't do anything if nothing's done about it.."* (Headteacher)

What is interesting here is that Registered Inspectors are not trying to shirk responsibility but to take more responsibility on the principal that it will improve the system.

> *"I guess that we're in the best position really to be consultants to schools... but It's not allowed."* (Registered Inspector/Small Contractor)

This view that monitoring and follow up is a problem is shared by many Headteachers and by the bigger contractors. Contractors point to the same "gap" and feel that at least some of the Registered Inspector force could fill it. It is a puzzle as to why this obvious "hole" has not been filled. A move to allow or encourage Registered inspectors to monitor school action plans and/or offer support and advice would give them access to

the field occupied by OFSTED. They would be in a position to engage in the Official Recontextualization of Inspection policy, rather than as now being in a position of being consulted as and when it is felt necessary.

The Question of Improvement

The inspection process and the report are clearly intended to provide a rigorous evaluation of the school, and in doing this provide significant markers of quality. In this sense it meets the requirements for school improvement that come out of recent research on effectiveness and improvement. There is a real problem though in that the literature indicates that it is self-evaluation rather than external evaluation that motivates change in teachers and school organisation. However, the value of OFSTED inspection in promoting change and improvement has been vigorously argued.

> *"It has never been claimed that inspections in themselves would be sufficient to improve schools, that must be true of other forms of school evaluation. Inspection falls into the intriguing category of things which are necessary but not in themselves sufficient to achieve school improvement." (Rose 1995)*

OFSTED has answered this criticism, made by one of its most senior inspectors, in the most recent guidance offered to schools by OFSTED focuses on the role of schools self evaluation. It is worth noting that the guidance booklet is entitled, "School Evaluation Matters".

> *"If schools are to maintain high standards or secure improvement, they need a strategy for appraising their own performance which compliments the thorough but occasional health check provided by inspection"* (OFSTED 1998)

The guidance then goes on to argue that schools should use the Framework and Handbook for inspection as a practical template for self evaluation.

> *"The Framework helps to evaluate why standards are as they are and to identify strengths and weaknesses. This diagnosis allows priorities for action to be decided."* (OFSTED 1998)

The reason that the Framework is so valuable is carefully spelt out with reference to the criteria for judgement and argues that they are accepted as valid and reliable.

"The criteria are:

- *based on those developed over a long period by HMI*
- *supported by research evidence on the factors associated with effective schools*
- *the result of progressive development, reflecting their use in the inspection of 20,000 schools over four years*

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- *subject to wide consultation whenever they are revised, as they were when first published*

The criteria, moreover,

- *do not presume any particular methodology in teaching or style of leadership; judgements are made in terms of the effectiveness of the process concerned;*
- *are limited in number, allowing schools to add others if they wish;*
- *are openly published, and are therefore readily available to the staff of schools, governors and parents as well as inspectors;*
- *are shown by research to form the basis of reliable and valid judgements by inspectors."* (OFSTED 1998)

The inspection report is the critical document in directing schools towards improvement by spelling out their strengths and weaknesses. However the quality of reports has been called into question. A large contractor takes the view that some reports are bland, lacks a critical edge or are simply badly written.

> *"It seems that for some Registered inspectors the report just comes off the word processor."* (Contractor)

The consequence is that the report does not clearly indicate to schools what aspects of their practice need improvement and what strengths they can build on. This criticism of the nature of the report, from an organisation convinced of the value of OFSTED inspection, is surprisingly similar to that presented by OFSTIN, an organisation convinced that OFSTED inspection procedures are harmful to many schools.

> *"The report language was simplistic and infantile.....Our report was bland, repetitive to a point of incoherence and demoralising to read for the whole team."(*Duffy ed undated)

Peter Matthews, OFSTED's head of inspection quality emphasised the importance of the report in a recent interview.

> *"But, in our terms, a successful inspection is one which gives clear feedback to the school and a clear well written report.* (Hoare 1997)

OFSTED has issued further directives and advice to Registered Inspectors since the new "Framework" was introduced in 1995. Registered Inspectors are enjoined to write reports in a clear and accessible language, give greater attention to the school's own self evaluation, include illustrations of significant judgements, emphasise strengths and weaknesses and include **clear key issues**.(our emphasis) "

While OFSTED, the DFEE, government advisory bodies and politicians remain convinced that inspection can lead to improvement this has not been universally accepted by education professionals. Even the most sceptical of OFSTED's critics have accepted the idea that external inspection is useful and a proper instrument for judging school performance. But the general response is that external evaluation is not enough, that schools must own the evaluation, become self evaluating institutions. "School Evaluation Matters" by urging schools to replicate the external evaluation conducted by OFSTED's inspection teams may be seen as meeting this criticism. Also the internal process of identifying strengths and weaknesses internally and diagnosing what works will clarify the key issues and identify targets for improvement.

Further, what critics point to is the problem that the mode and process of inspection brings and the way in which, in their view it hampers rather than encourages improvement. We take here Wragg and Brighouse's (1995) criticisms and proposals as representative of considered criticism combined with argued proposals for a better system. Their criticisms that are significant for this paper maybe summarised as follows;

the separation of inspection from advice leaves schools in a quandary as to how to plan to meet key issues,

reports are formulaic and too concerned with structures and management to offer a critical analysis of the school,

the current framework documents are too detailed and thus inspection cannot really take account of the school context.

They propose a mixture of local and national inspection involving, HMI, local authority inspectors and seconded Headteachers. A revised framework for inspection with core features but written in such a way as to enable the school context to be recognised. There should be a process of ongoing rigorous school evaluation and this should be supported guidance drawn from the inspectorial body. There are aspects of both these proposals and the criticisms above that chime in with the data we have from Registered Inspectors.

The literature on effectiveness and improvement accepts the need for a rigorous external evaluation of school performance. However the focus of school improvement is whole school development, ideally the creation of school as a self developing learning organisation. This movement sees external evaluation and feedback as "*elementary mechanisms*" (Scheerens and Bosker 1997) but stresses the problem that top down models have had and the relative lack of success of such models in engendering improvement. This leaves the current OFSTED with a dilemma in that along with DFEE it has adopted the ideas of school improvement but its mode and process of inspection can be seen as not in tune with the idea of the self developing learning organisation. Registered Inspectors share many of these criticisms of the current system of inspection in terms of it meeting the goal of school improvement as we have shown. How can schools use inspection to improve and who has a role?

Discussion

The highly developed system of inspection that operates in England and Wales provides a mechanism of accountability and quality control and assurance. Since its inception in 1992 it has been the subject of change. It is argued by OFSTED that this change has come about as a result of the experience of inspecting and the desire to provide schools with good modes of improvement. The recent move towards school evaluation but using criteria specified by OFSTED is an attempt to meet those in the school improvement movement who argue that change must arise from within the institution rather than be externally imposed. Alongside the "School Evaluation Matters" OFSTED will publish from 1998 school Performance and Assessment reports (PANDA) which will enable schools to compare their performance with schools in similar social settings and with a similar resource base. The inspection system in England and Wales has seized the moral high ground. The reiteration that inspection leads to improvement and the torrent of advice, guidance and prescription that has come from OFSTED has made criticism very difficult. In the current official political and policy discourse criticism of OFSTED seems at time akin to taking the part of Lucifer against Michael. It is to the relationship of inspection to the development of state education policy that we now turn.

The position of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is unique, as we noted above. His capacity for action because of his independence and his statutory position is very great and the present Chief Inspector, Chris Woodhead, has used that capacity. Inspection in its regulatory form is a system of surveillance but a form of surveillance in which via the central power of the state schools and teachers become implicit in "controlling" themselves. Moreover The Chief Inspector and OFSTED's location in the Official Recontextualizing Field means that they are defining and controlling pedagogical discourse. Foucault's (Rabinow 1986) coupling of knowledge-power we argue is evident in that OFSTED defines what is to be inspected and how, therefore what counts as quality in school is centrally determined. In its direction of how inspections are to be conducted and its demands on schools for access and documentation it ensures that schools as institutions and teachers as individuals police themselves using centrally proscribed criteria. The role of Registered Inspectors in this process is significant in that they directly interface with schools and ensure compliance with the state's regulatory framework. From the perspective of the Chief Inspector school improvement will come about by ever more prescribing the nature of pedagogy, by an increasing central control and definition of an official pedagogy. Compliance is assured both by the work of Registered Inspectors and institutional self surveillance.

The recent publications of the Chief Inspector in his annual report and lecture and his regular press statements show his propensity to operate in the policy making arena. It is noteworthy that before "QCA" the organisation responsible for the National Curriculum made any statement Chris Woodhead declared that primary schools should now attend to a core curriculum of English, maths and science and in doing so "drop" other subjects.[2] In

[2] The National Curriculum for primary schools consists of three core subjects, English, mathematics and

doing this he is also prescribing the pedagogy of English and maths by declaring that in future primary schools will be inspected against their compliance with the so called "Literacy and Numeracy Hours". These pedagogical prescriptions define what is to be taught, when it is to be taught and the sequencing of activities during in each hour.

The change of government in 1997 in the UK has not brought about the expected, in some quarters, down playing of inspection and centralisation. Rather the reverse, the new Labour government has moved along a much more prescriptive line with respect to pedagogy than the previous Conservative one. It also seems to have identified in OFSTED and its Chief Inspector an important actor and ally in the policy field.

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science and six foundation subjects, art, design and technology, history, geography, PE, and music. In addition all schools must teach ICT and RE, although RE is not a National Curriculum subject.

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Figure 1
Interviews Conducted with Registered Inspectors

	Professional Background	Institutional Location
1	LEA Advisor	LEA
2	LEA Advisor	LEA
3	LEA Advisor	LEA
4	LEA Advisor	Private contractor
5	LEA Advisor	LEA
6	Primary Head, LEA Advisor	Private Contractor LEA
7	Primary Head, LEA Advisor	LEA Private Contractor
8	LEA Advisor, Primary Head	Private Contractor
9	LEA Advisor, Primary Head *	Private contractor
10	HE Lecturer	HE Inspection Unit
11	HE Lecturer	HE Inspection Unit
12	HE Lecturer	HE Inspection Unit
13	HE Lecturer	HE Inspection Unit
14	Former HMI	HE Inspection Unit
15	Former HMI	Independent Contractor
16	Former HMI	Independent Contractor
17	Primary Head	HE Inspection Unit Private Contractor
18	Primary Head, HE Lecturer, LEA Officer	Independent contractor

Notes
* Additional Inspector (AI)
Where the institutional location is designated as Private Contractor the inspector works for one or more companies
Where the institutional location is designated Independent Contractor the inspector at least in part owns the company.
Professional background represents actual professional history.

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